

SEPTEMBER 20, 2001

STATEMENT OF U.S. REPRESENTATIVE JAN SCHAKOWSKY DURING GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE HEARING ON *"PREPARING FOR THE WAR ON TERRORISM"*

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Like most Americans and all of my colleagues, I was glued to the television on September 11th, watching in dismay reports of the horrific attacks in New York, Washington, and over Pennsylvania. While those of us here today may not have personally lost loved ones in the past week, we all can empathize with the thousands and thousands of Americans who are grieving today. We can all relate to the traumatic impact this tragedy has had on so many in New York, DC, and across the nation and world as each of us I believe has been changed by last week's events. In just a few hours, our sense of security in this country was shattered, and it will be a long time before we take ordinary acts for granted again. All of us in this body should be particularly grateful that we were not part of the death toll.

Today, our hopes and prayers are with the injured and their families and the families of the victims. Today we also marvel at the courage of the firefighters, police, military personnel, emergency crews and volunteers, many of whom also perished, who have worked and are working so hard to save lives. I want to repeat a statement that I heard Mayor Giuliani make that firefighters and other emergency responders are responsible for saving over 25,000 lives last week.

Now is the time to take stock of what is truly important to each of us in our own lives and to move forward decisively together as a nation to ensure that this kind of tragedy will never again occur on American soil or anywhere and that those responsible are severely punished.

Last week, the Congress acted quickly to provide relief to New York and DC and to the victims' families. We also worked together to give the President the authority to respond appropriately to this attack.

We have some more important decisions to make as we move forward. We must decide on the specific actions to take to guarantee our safety and security in the future, to help a faltering economy made worse by this terrorist attack, and to bring to justice the perpetrators. As we make those decisions, we must ask one question again and again: Will this action achieve our goals of safety, security and justice?

We need to move cautiously, and consider all the consequences.

- The might of the United States is great and we must use it carefully and to eliminate terrorist threats, making sure that those who are responsible, and only those, pay the price.

- We must allocate all necessary resources to restore the lost sense of security that has been such an important part of American life, without violating the freedoms that make us proud to be Americans.
- Security measures at airports, on airplanes, and in public buildings may be irritating, but, in my view, both acceptable and necessary.
- Intrusions into private communications, however, must be thoughtfully debated and caution taken before we expand the government's right to step in.
- This is a time for Americans to come together, not turn on each other. There have been disturbing acts of bigotry and violence against Muslims, Arab Americans, Sikhs, and Jews. We must all take a strong stand against this in our own communities. Last weekend I sponsored a "Solidarity Walk" in my district that drew hundreds of people of all races, religions and national origins who joined hands and sang "God Bless America." We should also move quickly to pass the Hate Crimes Protection Act as an expression of our tolerance as Americans.
- We need to reevaluate how easily we want potential criminals as well as law-abiding citizens to be able to access firearms, flight training, and other potential tools that can facilitate acts of terror.
- We must ensure that those who might endanger our security never make it inside our borders. But we must never forget that this country was built by the contributions of immigrants from all over the world. Many of those who perished at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were immigrants or the sons and daughters of immigrants who had come here seeking a better life and who made this country a better place. We must continue to insist upon an immigration policy that welcomes people who make such valuable contributions to our diversity and our strength.
- We must strengthen our public health infrastructure to prepare for the possibility of bio terrorism.
- There are many economic consequences of this disaster. There are many industries and businesses that have been affected and may be legitimately coming to the taxpayers for help. But as we rethink our national funding priorities, we must remember that senior citizens still need relief from the high cost of prescription

drugs, children still need us to invest in their education, Social Security and Medicare still need to be protected.[]

All of these needs must be considered. As a proud member of this body, I have assured my constituents with hopeful certainty that our government is mobilized now to take decisive action to assure that this will never happen again.[] []

In the National Security Subcommittee we have had several hearings in the last few years on anti-terrorism policy.[] We have heard from scores of witnesses and members have had numerous discussions about the need to do more in this country to prevent and respond to terrorist attacks. I am glad that today we have with us some experts in the field who can help us to determine appropriate policy responses to the recent events. I want to thank all of our witnesses for being here today and look forward to hearing their advice on where we need to focus our efforts.[] I want to extend a particularly warm welcome to Benjamin Netanyahu the former Prime Minister of Israel-a country that is a great ally of the United States and one that has the unfortunate distinction of expertise in responding to terror.[] The Mr. Netanyahu's expertise in this field predates his service as Prime Minister and we are fortunate to have him with us here today.[] []

Mr. Prime Minister I would appreciate it if you would convey to Prime Minister Sharon and the Israeli people a message from me.[] That if the purpose of this despicable attack was to deter our commitment to freedom and our support for our democratic allies, like Israel, it has failed miserably.

We will have peace and security again in this country and we will continue our efforts to spread peace and security throughout the world. And we will stand together in this country and with our allies around the world and all those who consider themselves civilized, and we will have justice.